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AUTHOR Staggs, Frank M., Jr.; Nyberg, Kenneth L.
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ABSTRACT

Drug abuse and the differences in drug use patterns and related behavior between rural blacks and whites were examined. Questionnaires were administered to 993 (369 black and 624 white) rural adolescents in grades 7-12 in randomly selected schools in Texas. The instrument totaled 15 pages containing 65 items which yielded 178 quantifiable variables. Of the 178 variables, 134 directly dealt with various aspects of drug use and yielded 6 operational categories: respondent's use, peer use, parental use, peer influence, parental influence, and drug acquisition and dealing. The remaining 44 variables centered around measures of the respondents' biography, indicants of parental marital and socioeconomic status, various measures of religious membership and participation, career aspiration, death attitudes, delinquent activities and television viewing practices. Findings included: whites reported substantially greater use of "liquor" than did blacks; females reported greater use of "uppers" and "downers" than did males; adolescents from single-parent households were more likely to use all drugs than in households where both parents were living; for all drugs, adolescents reporting "positive" relationships with their mother and father were less likely to use than those with less favorable relationships; drug use increased with grade level; and while blacks were found to be less likely to use drugs on the whole, they were found to be more likely to sell drugs for more money than whites. (NQ)

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RACIAL DIFFERENCES IN RURAL ADOLESCENT DRUG ABUSE*

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Frank M. Staggs, Jr.
Department of Sociology
Texas A&M University

Kenneth L. Nyberg
Department of Sociology
Texas A&M University

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RACIAL DIFFERENCES IN RURAL ADOLESCENT DRUG ABUSE

Drug abuse remains a continuing issue in America. Clinical, policy and research efforts continue to receive widespread professional involvement as the phenomenon has clearly achieved "social problem" status. Only in rural America has attention been slow to crystallize. This paper addresses drug abuse and the differences in drug-use patterns and related behavior between rural Blacks and rural Whites.

INTRODUCTION

Little formal attention has been paid to rural social problems, including drug abuse patterns. As Smart, et al (1972), notes:

> no large scale study...has been made in regions with persons living on farms, in rural non-farm houses, small villages or town.

Though Smart corrected this oversight in Canada, similar work in America has only recently begun.

Given recent increases in rural in-migration (Cosby and Howard, 1976) and the findings of Smart (1972), Hays (1971) and Hampe (1976) the tendency for drug abuse patterns to be studied as a purely urban phenomenon seems now, if ever otherwise, untenable. While some studies have to some degree supported the notion that drug abuse is primarily of social concern in urban settings (Hays, Winburn and Bloom, 1975), the Canadian studies by Smart indicate that place of residence has little to do with drug use rates, though <u>type</u> of drugs used varied with residential settings. In comparing studies done in urban areas (Preston, 1970; SIDSC, 1972) and studies done in primarily rural

areas (Nyberg and Staggs, 1976), however, one is led to the conclusion that drug abuse is at least as much of a problem in rural America as it is in urban America.

Ethnic and racial differences in drug use have previously been reported. Separate studies dealing with drug usage among students within the Houston area have indicated that white students are more likely to use drugs than their Black counterparts (Preston, 1970; Hays, 1971): 39 percent of the Anglos and 11 percent of the Blacks studied reported use of marijuana; of the users, 69 percent were white and 21 percent were black (the difference is even more pronounced when one notes that Blacks outnumbered Whites in the overall number of respondents); Mexican-Americans were reported to use marijuana twice as much as Blacks (Preston, 1970).

Preston (1970) also found that while 18 percent of the marijuana users attended predominantly Black schools, 82 percent attended predominantly white schools.

> This finding is interesting in view of the fact that marijuana use in this country originated in and spread from the ghetto areas. This being the case, one might have expected marijuana use among the Black schools to be in equal or greater proportion to that among the White. Obviously, the data suggest that this is not the case. (Preston, 1970:12)

He also noted that almost 50 percent of the respondents from the campus having the greatest socio-economic standing were "users." Hays, (1971) on the otherhand, while substantiating the Black-White differences, found that Blacks tended to use drugs more than Mexican-Americans.[1] On the whole, both the Preston and Hays findings that Whites are more likely to use drugs than Blacks are consistent with findings in other

parts of the country (primarily urban). They both conclude that one of the reasons for the disparity between Black-White drug use are differences in socio-economic standing: i.e., the expense of drugs reduces the availability of drugs for those less affluent. In general, minority groups tend to be less affluent than Anglos.

A study by Hampe (1976) dealing with alcohol consumption showed that while rural individuals were less likely to drink alcoholic beverages, whites are more likely to drink than Blacks. Moreover, the statistical difference in drinking patterns has appeared only over the past 13 years.

As stated previously, little formal attention has been paid to rural social problems. Even less attention has been paid to the social problems associated with drug abuse which generate and are intensified by delinquents and subcultural participation.

THE SAMPLE, METHODS AND INSTRUMENTATION

Data were obtained from sampled adolescents in six "rural" and one "urban" counties in Texas.[2] Briefly, the sampling procedure utilized a stratified-cluster design. Target schools within each county were randomly selected. One selected school appeared unwilling to co-operate so a replacement draw for that county was effected. From these pools, efforts were made to randomly generate sub-populations within schools by randomly selecting "homerooms" within grade specific levels. In two cases, this could not be done due to scheduling conflicts. In two additional cases it made no difference since there was but one "homeroom" per grade. In all cases, selection procedures selectively excluded "special" populations, e.g., "learning disability" classes, "behavior problem" classes, and the like. In

general, the samples populations, when replacement was made necessary, were selected with issues of "typicality" most prominent.

Overall, almost eleven percent of the total, publicly enrolled school population, grades seven through twelve, was obtained (N=1,358). This does not include seven response instruments which were not used in the analysis due to insufficient or highly irregular completeness or other coding irregularities. Altogether, 1,365 respondents were gathered from an ideal population of 12,946. The sampled population included 723 males, 635 females, 405 Blacks, 862 Caucasians and 71 Mexican-Americans. Respondents' ages ranged from 12 years to 20 years old.

Of the total sample obtained, 993 "rural" respondents were included, which represents the sample used for this paper. Of these respondents, 369 were Black and 624 were White.

A questionnaire was administered to each of the respondents. The instrument totaled fifteen pages containing sixty-five items or indicants yielding one-hundred and seventy-eight (178) quantifiable variables.

Completion of the questionnaire required from fifteen minutes to over an hour, depending upon grade level and reading competency of the respondent. Where necessary, the research team assisted the respondent by reading the question to him/her or answering non-controversial questions, e.g. "what does 'self-employed' mean?"

Of the one-hundred and seventy-eight variables included in the instrument, 134 directly dealt with various aspects of drug use. Briefly, these 134 variables yielded the following 6 operational categories: (1) Respondent's Use, (2) Peer Use, (3) Parental use,

(4) Peer Influence, (5) Parental Influence, (6) Drug Acquisition and Dealing. The remaining forty-four variables centered around measures of the respondents' biography, indicants of parental marital and socio-economic status, various measures of religious membership and participation, career aspiration, death attitudes, delinquent activities and television viewing practices.

FINDINGS

Generally, drug-use by rural adolescents is less than that which occurs for all youth (Nyberg and Staggs, 1976). Controlling for sex and race of respondent indicates general patterns of males using more than females, and whites using more than BLACKS, though in these and other cases the findings are invariably drug specific and often community specific, as well. Regarding the former caveat, it should be noted that whites report substantially greater use of "licquor" than do blacks, and that females report greater use of "uppers" and "downers" than do males (see Table 1).

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Though etiological issues are not the primary focus of this paper, several important points should be delineated.

Essentially, there were no statistically significant relationships between respondents "socio-economic status" (SES) and drug use. Utilizing two measures of occupational prestige (e.g. mother's and father's via the Duncan Socio-Economic Index) as correlated with drug use frequency (Pearson Product-Moment Correlation), significant correlations ($p < .01$) pertained only to frequency of Licquor consumption ($r = .105$; $r = .114$) for the rural subsample, and then only between "Mother's Occupation" ($r = .126$) and frequency of

upper use. Weak as the other correlations are, their general pattern reflects a slightly positive relationship between drug use and SES in rural areas with the exception of "harder" drugs (e.g. Cocaine and Heroin) where the inverse is indicated. It is important to note, however, that the overwhelming conclusion to be drawn is that SES as measured by Father's and Mother's occupational prestige is not significantly related to drug use frequency in rural environs.

Though SES is not significantly related to adolescent drug use, some interesting relationships were revealed regarding the "marital status" of the respondents' parents and his/her frequency of drug use. In rural areas, the general pattern is that adolescents from single-parent households were more likely to use all drugs than in households where both parents were living. Particularly, Marijuana (r=.109), Downers (r=.132) and Solvent use (r=.075) were found to be statistically significant correlates with single-parent families, though the magnitude of these correlations indicates weak rather than strong relationship. Still, the directional pattern is consistent. There is some evidence that children from single-parent families (whether due to divorce, separation or widowhood) are more frequent users of all drugs, particularly Marijuana and Downers, than are children from two-parent families. Mairjuana usage is significantly correlated with single-parentage (r=.109). A weak and only sporadically significant relationship exists between single-parent families and adolescent drug use. Still, the data are strong enough to challenge others' findings (Preston, 1970:17) that family intactness and drug use are unrelated. The data presented here require the con-

clusion that whereas the relationship between family intactness and adolescent drug use is not strong, it is consistent in that single-parent adolescents are somewhat more likely to use drugs than are two-parent adolescents, particularly (perhaps exclusively) with regards to marijuana usage.

"Significant-other influence" (SOI) was tri-chotomized into three separate variables: Mothers' Influence, Fathers' Influence and Peers' Influence. For all drugs adolescents reporting "positive" relationships with their mother and their father were less likely to use than with those reporting less favorable relationships. Strictly speaking, statistically significant ($p<.01$) relationships existed between the character of the relationship the respondent held with his/her mother and father and subsequent frequency of drug use. The more positive the relationship, the less the drug use---for all drugs. In general, the father's influence was greater than the mother's. More intriguing is the influence of peers, or friends. As indicated in Table 2, peer influence affected drug use more substantially than did either mother or father influence.

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

Considering just marijuana usage, the relationship between peer influence and frequency of use was .393 for rural adolescents (Pearson Product-Moment Correlation $p<.001$). Comparing these findings with parental influence, we note rural mothers' relationship to drug use to be .118; rural fathers' to be .149 (see Table 2).

Proceeding on the assumption that recently in-migrated adolescents may have less firm friendship ties than life-time resident adolescents and that the recently in-migrated may be more inclined to

socialize with frequent drug users, the effect of in-migration on respondents' peer use was analyzed. As with respondents' use, no statistically significant relationship was found for rural adolescents. As such, the effect (direct) of "in-migration" on both respondent and respondents' peer use is questionable. For rural adolescents our data clearly show no effect.

Thus far, the data suggest that Structural Variables (i.e. parents marital status, SES, respondents' age, sex, mobility, etc.) have little effect on adolescent drug use, or at least, that Interpersonal Variables (i.e. mother, father, peer Significant Other Influence, etc.) are more strongly correlated with respondents' frequency for drug use than are the Structural Variables. The remainder of the findings to be reported address the racial differences between adolescent drug use and concurrent delinquent activities.

There were few statistically significant differences in drug use when controls for race were applied, though the general pattern follows those of previous studies in indicating greater use among white adolescents than among their Black counterparts. With the exception of one rural campus, white students were considerably more likely to use beer, wine and licquor than were Black students. To a lesser extent, this pattern also held regarding Upper and Downer use. This pattern was reversed with regards to Hercin, Cocaine and Solvent use. In the one school where blacks were more likely to use alcohol, they were also four times more likely to use marijuana than white (29.4 percent to 7.7 percent). In all other cases, differences were either negligible or drug and community specific and hence difficult to generalize from.

Drug-use differences by race were amplified when controls for grade level were introduced. Differences by race were stronger for high school students concerning beer consumption, though the differences between the two races in regard to wine and licquor consumption were stronger at the junior high school level. Strong differences between Blacks and Whites at the seventh grade level were noted indicating that whites were much more likely to consume alcoholic beverages, though this difference between races at the eighth and ninth grade levels was noted only for licquor, remaining for the tenth graders, disappearing at the eleventh grade level and reappearing at the twelth grade. Differences by race appear indicating greater use by whites of beer at the tenth and eleventh grade levels.

Further evidence does suggest that drug-use is hierarchially socialized (increasing with grade-level in school). The relationship between year in school and frequency of marijuana use is both positive and statistically significant. For rural adolescents, the Gamma is .147 ($p < .05$) suggesting a degree of heirarchial socialization in rural areas.

These findings indicate that the existence of a "drug subculture" is apparent in the rural schools, with the interesting qualification that if a drug-subculture is emerging in the rural schools then it is emerging for rural, adolescent females and not males. However, when operationalizing membership in delinquent drug-based subcultures[3] (Nyberg and Staggs, 1977), no differences by race appeared in the patterns of adolescent participation in such groups. As indicated in Tables 3, 4 and 5, other differences did appear when looking at aspects related to drug usage. White students tended to know more individuals

who have used marijuana and/or who use the substance regularly.

TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

Coupled with the finding that white students are more likely to use drugs more than their black counterparts it is interesting to note that white students tend to perceive more disapproval of marijuana use from both parents and peers. Concerning the degree of influence, white students perceived more influence emanating from peers, siblings and intimates (girl-or boyfriends, spouses).

TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE

TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE

Finally, while white students knew of more individuals who use marijuana, it was the Black students who apparently perceived greater percentages of their schoolmates as marijuana users.

Though there appeared no significant differences in subcultural membership patterns, significant differences did appear concerning acquistion patterns of drugs. While blacks were found to be less likely to use drugs on the whole, they were found to be more likely to sell drugs for more money than whites. However, whites who used drugs were slightly more likely to acquire the drugs by buying them and Blacks were slightly more likely to have the drugs given to them. In addition, once Black students had acquired drugs, they were more likely to sell to friends and acquaintences. White students tended to keep the drugs for personal use more than Blacks. Moreover, given that the amount Blacks receive in any given drug transaction exceeds that of whites, it appears that the overall extent of "dealing" is greater for Blacks.

Several differences appear concerning the ages when the individual

first tries certain drugs. Whites are more likely to try beer and marijuana at an earlier age than Blacks; Blacks seem to be more likely to try tobacco products and hard licquor at an earlier age. No significant differences by race appear for other drugs.

Concerning delinquent activities,[4] no significant differences were found between Blacks and Whites except for car theft, which includes taking without permission a vehicle for only a short period of time for the purpose of "joy-riding". White students are more likely to participate in this type of activity. However, when the controls for membership are applied, it appears that Blacks who have taken cars illegally are more likely to be members of a drug-based delinquent subculture. This same relationship appears for vandalization activities (though the relationship is weaker and less significant).

CONCLUSION

Rural drug abuse, and its attendant social problems, has only recently begun to receive attention by researchers. Though in general drug abuse by rural adolescents is less than that which occurs for all youth, the extent of drug use, from tobacco to "hard" drugs cannot be overlooked.

Findings from these and other studies indicate that white youth are more likely to use drugs. Peer influences have more effect on individual use of drugs than parental influences, though the latter is hardly negligible. While significant patterns of membership in drug based delinquent subcultures have previously been reported, no significant differences can be discerned between Black students and white students. However, acquisition and distribution patterns for

illicit drugs are different for Blacks and Whites. Blacks are more likely to buy and sell drugs, especially among friends, and tend to receive more money in drug transactions. Whites tend to keep the drugs for personal use. Blacks and Whites tend to first use drugs at approximately the same age except for tobacco, beer, hard licquor, and marijuana. Whites tended to begin using beer and marijuana earlier than Blacks.

Further research is indicated in the many aspects of drug use and attendant behavior of rural youth. Analyses of rates, gender differences, racial differences, and subcultural patterns make but a small contribution to the understanding of the growing phenomenon of drug use among rural youth.

NOTES

1 The reason for the reported differences between the Preston and Hays studies might be that the number of Mexican American respondents in the Preston Study were much smaller than the number of other ethnic respondents.

2 Characterizing the research area as rural is not mere impression-reflection. For all counties but one, the percentage of the labor-force (employed) involved in agriculture exceeds ten percent, ranging from 11.5 percent to 16.7 percent.

Aside from "rurality", three other facets characterize the seven county area: (1) multiraciality, (2) poverty, and (3) growth. Of the 142,900 residents in the seven county area served, 87,389 are white, 31,636 are black and 9,617 are Spanish-surnamed, though dispersal is not even throughout the area. Regarding poverty, it is important to note that only in two counties does per capita income exceed $2,000, though the range is reasonably approximate between the otehr counties, e.g. $1,657 to $1,919. And finally, the overall population growth in the area has been quite robust, averaging 10.5 percent over the past four years.

In each of these areas, and in others besides, an important dimension is that one county is noticeably unlike the other six counties. It maintains a higher per capita income, greater population growth and larger population. Moreover, it reports a markedly higher median educational level and even its' sex-ratio exceeds the other counties. For these and other reasons, including sheer population magnitude (SSMA), one county's adolescents are defined as "urban", while the others are considered "rural".

3 Membership in a marijuana-based delinquent subculture was operationalized as follows: (1) having used marijuana at least once; (2) knowing at least one other individual who has used marijuana; (3) knowing at least one individual who has used the illicit substance regularly; (4) answered certain indicators which point to the pre-eminence of peer influence over parental influence leading to marijuana related behavior; and (5) indicated that they have participated to some degree in a pattern of distribution of drugs. Non-member users are defined as those respondents who have used marijuana at least once, but failed to meet one or more of the other criteria.

4 Specific "delinquent" variables were operationalized in the following manner:

> How many times have you taken a car for a ride without the owner's permission? State number of times _____.
>
> How many times have you banged up something that did not belong to you on purpose? State number of times _____ .
>
> How many times have you beaten up on anyone or hurt anyone on purpose, not counting fights you may have had with a brother or sister? State number of times _____ .

NOTES cont.

How many times have you taken something of value that did not belong to you and then sold it to someone else for money? State number of times _____ .

What is the greatest amount of money you have ever earned selling drugs at any one time? Answer: _____ .

TABLE 1
PERCENTAGE USE* OF DRUGS BY
RACE & SEX
*(at least once)

	BLACK		WHITE	
	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE
TOBACCO	52.4	46.1	81.7	58.6
BEER	72.3	64.9	83.3	79.6
WINE	67.0	53.0	71.5	70.6
LICQUOR	39.7	32.7	59.2	59.4
MARIJUANA	20.8	8.4	14.1	11.4
LSD	4.1	3.0	1.3	2.3
UPPERS	4.1	4.8	3.5	6.2
DOWNERS	5.1	4.2	5.1	8.4
HALLUCINOGENS	2.0	1.2	2.3	2.9
HEROIN	3.1	3.7	0.6	1.0
COCAINE	2.1	3.7	1.0	1.6
SOLVENTS	5.1	5.5	7.7	3.9

TABLE 2
SIGNIFICANT OTHER
INFLUENCES ON DRUG USE

DRUGS	MOTHER	FATHER	PEERS
TOBACCO	.210	.219	.508
BEER	.325	.370	.518
WINE	.328	.323	.459
LICQUOR	.333	.371	.461
MARIJUANA	.118	.149	.393
LSD	.366	.349	.337
UPPERS	.214	.250	.397
DOWNERS	.354	.263	.358
HALLUCINOGENS	.239	.461	.297
HEROIN	.312	.443	.426
COCAINE	.383	.547	.497
SOLVENTS	.474	.434	.508

(ALL CORRELATIONS PRODUCT-MOMENT)

TABLE 3
RELATIONSHIP OF RESPONDENTS' MARIJUANA USE TO ACQUAINTANCES' USE OF MARIJUANA USE, CONTROLLING FOR RACE.

	RURAL	
	BLACKS	WHITES
NUMBER OF ACQUAINTANCES WHO HAVE TRIED MARIJUANA	.119*	.247**
NUMBER OF ACQUAINTANCES WHO USE MARIJUANA 'REGULARLY'	.091*	.224**

(ALL CORRELATIONS ARE PRODUCT-MOMENT)
*P < .05 - **P < .01

TABLE 4
PERCEIVED PEER APPROVAL/DISAPPROVAL OF MARIJUANA USE
(P < .001)

	BLACKS	WHITES
STRONGLY APPROVE	6.0%	1.2%
APPROVE	6.0%	1.8%
NEITHER APPROVE/DISAPPROVE	54.4%	55.6%
DISAPPROVE	9.6%	12.7%
STRONGLY DISAPPROVE	24.0%	35.7%

TABLE 5
PERCEIVED PARENTAL APPROVAL/DISAPPROVAL OF MARIJUANA USE

	BLACKS	WHITES
STRONGLY APPROVE	3.7%	.5%
APPROVE	2.1%	1.2%
NEITHER APPROVE/DISAPPROVE	29.6%	16.1%
DISAPPROVE	11.6%	11.9%
STRONGLY DISAPPROVE	53.7%	70.0%

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